



**United States Department of the Interior  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

Fort Smith National Historic Site  
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<http://www.nps.gov/fosm/>

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**FORT SMITH NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
Educator's Guide to Programs and Resources  
Fall 2000 – Spring 2001**

Fort Smith National Historic Site, located in downtown Fort Smith, embraces the remains of two frontier forts, and the 19<sup>th</sup> century Federal Court for the Western District of Arkansas. Commemorating a significant phase of America's westward expansion, it stands today as a reminder of 80 turbulent years in the history of Federal Indian policy.

Fort Smith National Historic Site will reopen on June 24 with new exhibits in the rehabilitated visitor center. The visitor center is located in the historic barracks/courthouse/jail building. Teachers who have visited our park before will be pleased to know that we have tripled our exhibit space. The park grounds also have been improved and include several educational wayside exhibits.

We will be able to offer both guided and self-guided tours for school groups that explore the different park themes. The tours have been developed to meet the curriculum requirements of Arkansas and Oklahoma. Tours can be tailored to meet the specific needs of a classroom by talking to a park ranger.

**Planning Your Visit**

Tours are available Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Reservations are required for group tours. To make a reservation please call a park ranger at 501-783-3961, Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

It is recommended that you call no less than three weeks in advance to insure openings for your group. Due to the large number of spring field trips scheduled, it is recommended that you call several months in advance if you are planning an April or May visit. Programs are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Tour Length and Size**

Tour times vary according to the program requested. In general allow 1 – 2 hours at the park. This will allow time for a self-guided tour of the exhibits in the visitor center. A 15-minute orientation video can be shown to school groups that wish to view it or were unable to do so in their classroom before the tour (see Pre-Visit Materials).

To maintain program quality and encourage student involvement in the tour, groups are limited in size. First grade through twelfth grade groups are limited to 30 students in each tour group. Classes larger than 30 can usually be accommodated by dividing students into smaller groups. The required chaperone ratio is one adult for every ten students. Kindergarten and preschool groups are limited to 20 students with one chaperone for every five students. Chaperones are required to stay with the group at all times.

### **Fee Waiver Available**

Admission to the visitor center is normally \$3.00 for adults over the age of sixteen. Educational groups visiting the site for educational purposes can have the entrance fee waived by completing a Request for Fee Waiver Form. When you call to schedule your visit, you can request this form. It must be completed and returned to the park before the day of your visit in order to receive the waiver.

### **Scheduling Your Visit**

Schedule your reservation by calling a park ranger at 501-783-3961. Rangers may not be name-requested. The park ranger who takes your reservation will need to know the following information:

- Your preferred date and time
- Alternative dates and times
- Name of the accompanying teacher/leader and best time to call this person
- Number of children and number of adult chaperones attending
- Grade level of students
- Complete address and telephone number of school
- Guided or self-guided tour requested
- If you need a fee waiver form
- Pre-visit materials requested
- Any specific needs or requests

### **Pre-Visit Materials**

Before your scheduled tour visit you can request the following information and materials to help you prepare your students:

- Loan of a 15-minute orientation video \*
- Loan of a 18-minute video on the deputy marshals \*
- Loan of Photo Exhibits \*
  - Conflict of Cultures (Native Americans)
  - Civil War
  - Good Guys, Bad Guys (Deputy Marshals and Outlaws)
- Park bulletin with information on history of site and map of park
- Suggested bibliography

- List of books for sale in bookstore that might be of interest to educators
- List of neighboring attractions

\* Videos and photo exhibits are to be returned to park.

## **Guided Walking Tours Available**

Most of the tours will be held on the grounds of the park. After the guided tour we recommend that you schedule time for the students to tour the visitor center. Depending on park ranger availability, tours may include living history presentations.

Tours and topics available:

### Basic Site Tour

- Brief orientation in visitor center
- Site of First Fort
- Trail of Tears Historic Trail Overlook
- Commissary building
- Gallows

### Early Military and Trail of Tears

- Site of First Fort
- Trail of Tears Historic Trail Overlook and outdoor exhibits

### Second Fort Smith

- Site of parade grounds, Officers' Quarters, guardhouse, fort walls, and bastions from Second Fort
- Commissary

### Federal Court Period

- Judge Parker's Courtroom
- First Jail
- Exterior of Second Jail
- Gallows

## **Mock Trial Program**

Students may participate in mock trials held in the courtroom. The trials will be based on actual ones held in Judge Parker's courtroom. To participate in this program educators must request an educator's guide to use in preparing students for their visit. Educators need to work closely with a park ranger in setting up this program.

## **“Living the Legacy” (Multiple Visit Program)**

Students participating in the “Living the Legacy” programs visit the park three times during the course of the school year. Each visit is a two-hour long living history experience.

In the first visit, the students assume the role of the Rifle Regiment soldiers stationed at Fort Smith and learn about the Trail of Tears and the role of the first fort. In the second visit, students assume the role of artillery soldiers stationed at Fort Smith during the Civil War and learn about the Civil War in the West. On their third visit, students are sworn in as deputy marshals and learn how the federal court at Fort Smith operated.

Educators wishing to participate in this program must first attend a mandatory teacher workshop. For information on the workshop, please call a park rangers at 501-783-3961. A limited number of “Living the Legacy” programs will be scheduled each year.

## **Touring the Visitor Center Exhibits**

The newly rehabilitated visitor center has numerous exhibits and videos relating to the different themes of Fort Smith National Historic Site. We suggest you allow time after your guided tour for the students to see the exhibits that relate to your current curriculum needs. To make the experience most beneficial for your students we recommend that educators tour the exhibits beforehand and prepare a student worksheet or some type of activity or assignment for the class. Park rangers will be glad to offer suggestions and direction. In the future we hope to have educational materials to provide school groups touring the visitor center exhibits.

Listed below are some of the highlights of the exhibits:

- Frontier Army Life
- Interactive video on Indian Territory, Trail of Tears, and Traditional Indian culture
- Civil War in the West
- Judge Parker’s Courtroom
- First Jail audio program
- Second Jail with reconstructed jail cells
- Deputy Marshal video

## **Self-Guided Tours**

Reservations are required for self-guided tours to avoid overcrowding of visitor center. Group size and chaperone requirements are the same as those for guided tours (see Tour Length and Size). You may request pre-visit materials before you visit. If you want your class to view the 15-minute orientation video you will need to reserve a time when you schedule your tour. Seating is limited to 50 in auditorium.

## **Tour Reminders**

- You should arrive and check in at the visitor center at least ten minutes before your scheduled program time. Due to scheduling constraints, late arrivals may have their program delayed or cancelled.
- If you need to cancel your reservation for any reason, please call as soon as possible so we may offer the program to another group.
- Since much of the tour will include walking outdoors, students need to wear appropriate shoes and bring a jacket or coat during cool weather.
- Running and/or horseplay is discouraged.
- The woods are full of poison ivy. Stay on established trails/paths.
- The river can be dangerous with deep drop-offs and strong currents. Stay away from the river.
- Food, drinks, and chewing gum are not permitted in the visitor center.
- Please remind students not to touch displays or objects unless directed by a park ranger.
- Fort Smith National Historic Site is a unit of the National Park Service. Federal regulations are strictly enforced to ensure your safety and to preserve the park for future generations.
- Any programs or concerns should be brought to the attention of park staff or the park superintendent.

## **Facilities**

- Handicap accessible
- Restrooms in visitor center
- Closed-captioned videos in exhibits
- Bookstore, operated by Eastern National
- Multiple purpose classroom, available by reservation
- Drinking fountains outside and in visitor center
- No picnic facilities; groups may eat on grassy areas, off sidewalks
- Bus parking is available in parking lot at Garland Avenue and Third Street; groups can be dropped off at the corner of Third and Rogers

## **Neighboring Attractions**

You may wish to schedule a visit to other area attractions after your tour of Fort Smith National Historic Site. The Fort Smith Museum of History (501-783-7841) and the Trolley Museum (501-783-0205) are located in the immediate area. For more information on their education programs, please contact them directly. For information on other area attractions, please contact the Fort Smith Convention and Visitor's Bureau (Miss Laura's) at 501-783-8888 or 800-637-1477.

## **Off-site Programs**

Classroom visits to present the history of Fort Smith can be arranged. Park rangers can present living history programs about the first Fort Smith, 1830's – 1850's Army, Feeding the Frontier Army, Mexican War, the Civil War, Reconstruction, Indian Wars, Last Soldiers of Fort Smith, Gold Rush, or the deputy marshals. These programs may include historic weapons. Please check with your administration and local law enforcement agency to insure this is acceptable to your community.

Programs can also be given about careers in the National Park Service, Wildland Fire Fighting, and other topics by request. Up to one hour in duration. For more information, or to schedule an off-site program, please contact a park ranger.

By special arrangements some of these topics may also be presented on-site.

## **Expanded Web Site**

The park's expanded web site is an excellent resource. It includes articles on a variety of Fort Smith topics, historic photographs, on-line exhibits, and the teacher's guide for "Living the Legacy." <http://www.nps.gov/fosm/home.htm> The site includes links to a wide variety of resources.

## **Research Library**

The park has a small research library covering topics related to the first and second forts, the Civil War, the Trail of Tears, the deputy marshals, other Arkansas history, and western expansion. Microfilm records and other files are also available. Please call ahead to reserve the library for use.

## **Park Rangers**

For more information, questions, or suggestions about any of the park's programs you can call or e-mail a park ranger. (501-783-3961)

Eric Leonard ([eric\\_leonard@nps.gov](mailto:eric_leonard@nps.gov))  
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